

March 23, 2016

RE: SB 671

Dear Chairman Rocca and distinguished members of the Senate Regularity Reform Committee

Thank you for accepting this letter as testimony on SB 671. I have another obligation during this time, but wanted to convey concerns. I am the Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. This is the department where the Grape and Wine council is housed. The Grape and Wine council was established as a value add tool for the grape and fruit commodity group to provide resources to turning those agricultural commodities into a product that was worth more than the commodity itself.

I have appreciated communicating and working with Senator Hansen and his staff on this effort. While I do not speak for the council, I do wish to address some concerns with the concept of this bill. The bill attempts to include other members of the Michigan alcoholic beverage community to this group. The department expansion of all agricultural products related to this industry, especially those that can be cultivated in Michigan.

The Department does have concerns on the funding for the expanded council. With the limited funds that do come into the council and the proposed members of the council, the current services at the current level would not be sustained. If the goal of expanding this council is to provide similar level of services to the industries, additional funding would need to be provided.

I am happy to work with the Senator's office and the interest groups on creating a meaningful council that provides these services to the industry.

Thank you,

Matt Blakely, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs